

**SFS Event Notes**  
**Naples, Florida**  
**February 9, 2006**

**Host:** Georgie Pierpont Foster '61

President Christ began by outlining the topics of conversation and the strategic planning process as it is unfolding at Smith.

Following her description of the planning context, alumnae posed the following comments and questions.

**Alumnae from the Thirties**

Alumna said they have noticed changes in Smith, but it's still the same Smith they remember. They believe that friendships—old and new—are a prime benefit from having attended Smith.

**Alumnae from the Fifties**

Alumnae noted that it's harder for them to relate to the curriculum now. One alumna noted that she had two "grands" applying to college, and her granddaughter won't consider Smith. She wants to take film classes at Trinity and have boys in her classes. She felt girls are particularly quiet in co-ed classes. (An alumna from the '60s disagreed and said her son graduated from Harvard in '03, and the girls were just as vocal.)

On the subject of minorities, lesbianism on campus was brought up. One alumna thought Carol's answer was perfect—that this is not an issue to current students but to older alumnae.

**Alumnae from the Sixties**

An alumna asked how we reply to the statement that Smith is an anachronism. Smith needs to get a leading edge posture to disabuse alumnae of this notion.

Other comments were:

We recognize in hindsight what Smith gave us, how can we use this knowledge to show applicants what the end result can be?

Smith gave me confidence. I have no trouble making Alumnae Fund calls. I do think we need to focus more on public speaking skills. Students need to learn a wide body of knowledge.

If someone is going to become a teacher, she may be asked, "Why didn't you go to a teachers' college?" You have to be able to think broadly.

On the co-ed topic, an alumna felt that Wheaton went co-ed because their admission pool was not what they wanted.

Why are we recruiting overseas? Why are these students excellent?

An alumna who had recently received her Ph.D. said that peers were amazed at the faculty she studied with at Smith. Is faculty recruitment still easy?

If we're still a women's college, why are students trying to take gender out of the picture? Why don't they embrace feminism? Her daughter (class of '90) is upset about the transgender issue and feels the college is giving in. President Christ reminded the group that the SGA is self-governed, and the college does not control them.

Another alumna asked whether there are core requirements within the major (yes) and what other requirements exist (specific requirements for Latin honors).

An alumna wanted to know whether the college was becoming more conservative.

One alumna stated that if you know how to acquire skills, it's less important that you actually take math while in college. She asked whether using computers is a requirement.

One alumna mentioned graduating when the *The Feminine Mystique* was published. She thought she could do it all. She applauds the new offerings and facilities like WFI and the new gym. If you're not healthy, you can't do the work of the mind.

Another alumna noted that she wished she had learned multi-tasking skills. In life there are no carrels to go and hide in and focus on one thing at a time. As women we are faced with a multitude of responsibilities that men often don't have to deal with. All the responsibilities can take us off track. Is anything taught about juggling or getting around barriers? What is the cost of focusing on just one thing? Do we neglect our health and children to focus on our minds? Are women's stories presented to students?

President Christ mentioned the "Narratives of Success" project to be funded by an alumna just for this purpose. She also mentioned Laura Nash's book, *Just Enough*. She said that we should tell students not only what we've succeeded in, but also what we've survived and how we did it.

An alumna who said she had great interactions while on campus for a symposium on the silk trade wanted to know if there much interaction between students and alumnae.

An alumna asked whether the applicant pool is mostly from the northeast. President Christ described how demographics are shifting and how the northeast population is expected to contract. Another alumna asked whether Smith might use alumnae who have retired and have more time to be in contact with students, perhaps through e-mail.

An alumna noted that she got her first job at the Guggenheim without a resume because they loved Smith graduates. She puts Smith at the top of her art resume.

Alumnae asked whether students are engaged in volunteer work, noting the need to build the capacity for social engagement.

An alumna said she had read the other SFS notes on the web and wondered how we could use these comments as recruiting tools.

**Alumnae from the Seventies**

An alumna wondered whether there is a way to know if women who chose Smith over the Ivies had different post-graduate achievement.

In response to President Christ's remark that the one subject students most avoid is math, an alumna affirmed the need for crucial analytical thinking. President Christ noted that this need is one reason Smith is considering a stronger quantitative reasoning element in the curriculum.

President Christ thanked the hostess and the alumnae for their time and thoughts.